

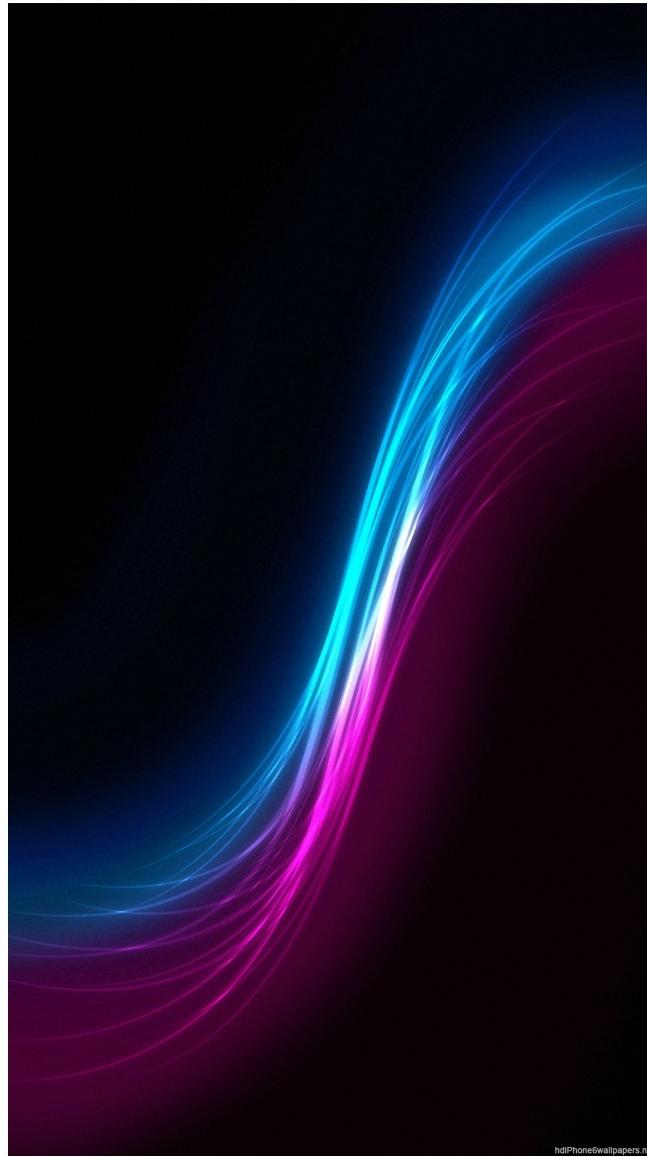
TOE vol 2 *prajnanam brahma*
Consciousness is the Absolute

ayam atma brahma
This Self is the Absolute

tat tvam asi
That Thou Art

aham brahmasmi
I am the Absolute Reality

J Stiga



Ch. 15 – daily "Non-Duality & Science" blogs

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Reality 100

Observing Life & Death, those who desire to be free of Death should seek the immortality of the Self, using that same desire be free of Death to find Liberation. Find clarity regarding the desire to endure, & thus turn this innate desire into the desire for Self-Realization. This Realization alone can fulfill that innate desire. Those who perceive mortality, feel the urge to find something that does not die. They

recognize that everything in the World is perishable. Therefore what they seek must be found within in a way that transcends what is physical. They see that it is futile to be attached to that which is only going to pass away sooner or later, so seek spirituality for immortality. This immortality is to be found in the Self. Abidance as the Self is Knowledge of the Self. An Inquiry into the knowledge of Immortality reveals that Bliss & Immortality are the same & that both are realizable by Knowledge.

As a result of comprehending the Non-Dual Teaching, one is liberated from the illusory connection to the Body & what is mortal. The fusion of the desire for Happiness & the desire to exist results in one being endowed with a singular focus upon Self-Realization. This enables one to practice the Inquiry to know the Self with the power of undistracted meditation.

Fullness & Perfection, the unceasing Bliss, reside in That which neither rises nor sets, which neither begins nor ceases. The experience of Happiness is connected with the desire for Eternity. No one desires a Happiness that will cease. Rather, the desire is for Happiness that will not cease & is forever. The desire for Immortality is as strong as the desire for Happiness. The 2 are inextricably woven together. Just as no one wishes to be unhappy, so no one wishes to cease to exist, though one may wish *objective* appearances, such as the Senses, the Body, & the Thoughts to cease. All with to continue forever. This is an intuition of the true nature of Existence.

The desire to exist cannot be fulfilled externally in bodily forms. The true state of Being, when it is unrealized & delusion is present, manifests as the desire for this or that to last. Realized, the Self itself is the un-born & the un-dying. The Self abides in the state of imperturbable Peace, completely detached & non-dependent on anything else. The Self is transcendent of the entire Universe for all Time. The desire to endure springs from the deepest & it is fulfilled solely by realizing the deepest, which is the eternal Existence of the Self.

Immortality is complete Happiness, for the essence of both is the same, & only that which is unending is complete. The transitory is not complete, & that which is Suffering is not Eternal. The Realization of the Self is blissful Immortality. It is Abidance in & as That which has no beginning or end. The desire for Happiness & Immortality are the same. They come from the same intuition of Truth of the Self. Only Abidance as the Self, which is the Reality, fulfills both.

The Self is That which has no beginning or end & is That which is Real or truly existent. The Self is changeless. Whatever has a beginning or a change & an end is unreal. The “being unreal” may be understood as being utterly non-existent, or as the Existential entirely mis-perceived. To experience blissful Immortality, one must realize the Existence of the Self as it really is; one must abide as the beginningless & endless, as the changeless. The Knowledge of the Self is the Knowledge of the Eternal, the unchanging, & the completely blissful. It is the Knowledge of Reality. This is the only true Perception. To see anything else is to see the non-existent. That is Ignorance. Ignorance is composed of assumptions & superimpositions. It is the non-perception of Reality & the mis-perception of Reality. That displays itself as the non-seeing of Real, Non-Dual Being & the hallucination of Duality or Multiplicity. The knowing of anything, be it gross (*physical*) or subtle (*mental, etc.*), without the Knowledge of the Self, is simply diversified Ignorance, or diversified Illusion. In the Knowledge of Reality of the Self, there remains neither Multiplicity nor Duality, nor anything else.

One Formless Existence is with no differentiation whatsoever. One Formless Existence appears as if it were all this multiplicity. All the multiplicity is only the one Formless Existence imagined as such.

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To realize the Truth, for the Truth to be Self-revealed, one should abandon Ignorance, multiplicity, the transitory, & the illusion of form, & abide as the Formless, which is Real, Non-Dual, & ever-existent. This Abidance is Knowledge. The destruction of Illusion means the destruction of Ignorance regarding the Self, or the destruction of mis-identification. Such is the destruction of Suffering & the end of Death. This is blissful Immortality. It is simply the vanquishing of Ignorance. By the Truth being revealed within, mis-identifications, or superimpositions are destroyed. By the destruction of mis-identifications, or superimpositions, Truth is revealed within.

In Self-Realization, all notions about the Absolute & the Self are relinquished. Notions about the Absolute are such as that it is separate from oneself, or *objective*, & that it is always-present. Notions about the Self are such as that it is endowed with Form, minuteness, that it is changeful, material, embodied, defined by thought, in Time, or endowed with Individuality. For Knowledge, the superimposition of the *jiva*-hood (*concept of individuality*) is removed from *Atman* (the Self) & *Isvara*-hood (*idea of the Lord God*) is removed from *Brahman* (the Absolute). Upon removal of such superimposition, or Ignorance, one realizes the Identity, as declared in the Upanishad, *Tat tvam asi* (*Thou art That*). If the Self remains undefined, it is only *Brahman*, & That alone. Therefore, one should know the Self.

The Knowledge of Reality, which is the Realization of the Self & the Realization of the Absolute, is attained by the direct path of true Knowledge. By liberating oneself from the mis-identification with what is not the Self, one knows the Self. When the Real Nature of what has been considered as the non-Self is seen, it invariably proves to be non-existent, for such non-Self was dependent upon mis-identification in order to even ever appear.

Blissful & Eternal is the Real Self. One should regard only that which has no beginning or end, is ever existent, is unchanging, is transcendent of all that has Form, of all that changes, & all that is in Time. The Self is also continuous & undivided as Real & one's own true Being. By this Knowledge, one abides in the Natural State, which is the only True State of the Self. The Self may be said to call unto itself, as the *Sought* & as the *Seeker*; as the *Guru* & as the *disciple*; as *God* & as the *devotee*. The Self seeks itself in meditation. The Self reveals itself as inner experience. The Self knows & abides in itself for blissful Eternity.



Reality 101

The Absolute Reality, which is Infinite & Eternal, can be realized so that one abides in that Reality, as it is always. To thus realize is to "Abide" in lasting Peace, complete spiritual Freedom, & perfect Happiness which is spiritual Bliss. The way to do this is to know oneself, for if one knows oneself as one really is, that in the itself is indeed the Absolute & not what one might have mistakenly conceived oneself to be.

Regardless of whatever be the spiritual practices in which one may engage, eventually he or she is brought to this: the importance of knowing one's True Nature as it is. Self-Inquiry which is characterized by asking within oneself "Who am I?", is the keen Discernment of what one is & the relinquishment of ignorant mis-identifications.

Reality is ever existent. If one perceives something that has appearance & disappearance, it is but a temporary thing. If one examines the experience of that, one sees that it is not Existence itself, but I guys for it, a mis-perception of it, or an Illusion based upon Reality, but not Reality itself. Existence does not come or begin & go or cease to exist. To know Reality as it is, one must cease to regard as real what are only mis-perceptions or Illusions.

The Self is the Reality, ever-existent, Unborn, Imperishable, Limitless, & Formless. The Self is identical with the Absolute. If one does not experience the Self is identical with the Absolute, this is due to lack of Self-Knowledge. What prevents Self-Knowledge is one's own adherence to Ignorance about the self. If the Ignorance ceases, Self-Knowledge shines, & one's Being is left in its True State. Ignorance consists of mis-identifications regarding oneself. With mis-identification, & seems to be 2, an Absolute Self & an individual self. The Non-Dual Teachings of Self-Knowledge are intended to remove that false differentiation dissolution of mis-identifications. Mis-identification starts with the

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assumption of being an individual entity, a separate "I", & consists of defining this "I" in a variety of Delusive ways.

Thereupon follow the mis-identifications with the Mind or thought, with the Life Energy or *prana*, with the Senses, with the Body, & then with various things in the World or the relation to them. From these there arise all kinds of modes of Mind, motion, & Bondage of all sorts that create Suffering.

When one recognizes that the source of Happiness & Peace is within, that Suffering is not produced by external factors (*such as other people, objects, & circumstances or their absence*) but is created by one's own Delusion, he commences a Path to Self-Knowledge. Proceeding to actual Self-Inquiry within oneself as to what one is, is the practice.

Listening to Teachings pertaining to Self-Knowledge, Reflecting upon them, & then deep Meditation to be absorbed in their essential meaning – these support this Self-Inquiry to know the Self. [*shravana, manana, nididhyasana*] Eliminating Ignorance, or mis-identification by such Self-Inquiry results in Self-Realization, which is freedom from Delusion regarding the Self, or Reality.

One should know that the Self is not made of matter & is therefore not the Body. The idea of being a Body occurs only in one's Mind. All Delusions are created & sustained only in the Mind. Delusions are not physically caused. The Body does not produce Ignorance & Ego & such. So one should quest within the Mind itself, transcending it while destroying its Illusions. Spiritual practice is with the Mind and addresses the Mind so that Consciousness alone remains. To see Illusion as Illusion, Ignorance as only Ignorance, is sufficient & most effective for clearing the way to experience Self-Knowledge.



Reality 102

Bondage is only Ignorance, or error in understanding. One does not attain Self-Knowledge due to Ignorance about the True Nature of the Self & adherence to false conceptions about the Self. The Ignorance makes one feel bound, & the adherence to false notions maintains the Ignorance, yielding the apparent solidity & false continuity of Illusion. Both Ignorance & the tendency to adhere to it are destroyed by Self-Inquiry to know the Truth of the Self.

Sri Shankara declares that just as trees on the bank seem to move when one is in a moving boat, so “transmigratory existence” (*life in a Waking World, repeating like nightly dreams, but rather as physical*” Re-incarnation) seems to be true to one who mis-identifies the Self with the Mind.

Thus, when the Mind “moves”, one thinks that the Self (*like the stationary trees*) “moves”. When the Mind is still, one assumes the Self is still. Because the modifications of the Mind are pervaded by the reflected light of Consciousness, with the qualities of Reality & Identity borrowed from pure Being, one assumes that the Self is identical with the Mind & identifies oneself with those modifications. Thus one imagines, “my thoughts, my state of Mind or being, my experiences, etc.” The Mind, or the Ego, is *objective*, appearing by the light of pure (*absolute non-dual*) Consciousness alone. Pure Consciousness is the Absolute & is directly realized as existing as such when the “this”, or the *objective* portion, falsely attributed to it is negated.

Ignorance, or Illusion, is merely a superimposition. By “superimposition” is meant the imagined placement of some attributes, that do not belong to the Self, upon the Self. The basis of the superimposition is real. That basis is pure Existence, pure Consciousness. The superimposed is not a reality in & of itself, but is only a product of Imagination, the result of Ignorance.

It is like the *snake* imagined to be present when there is only a discarded *rope* in dim light. The *snake* is not real & was not really born. But in Imagination, the *snake* seems to be there, & as long as one is convinced that the *snake* is there, the true *rope* is invisible. If one removes that Illusion with the light of Knowledge, he sees the *rope* alone, as it is, which has been the only reality the entire time. The *snake* in the analogy represents all that is attributed falsely to the Reality of the Absolute Self, such as the World, the Body, Mind & its conceptions & tendencies, as well as Ego.



Reality 103

The removal of superimposition is accomplished by Self-Inquiry. This is the intention of the negation of the Upanishads, “*neti, neti*”, “not this”. Such indicates the negation of one’s attributes, identity, or definition, of what is not truly the Self, not the essential Existence, or pure Consciousness. The removal of superimposition is the revelation of the Truth. The Truth, or the Reality, is not newly created, nor did the superimposition diminish it in any way, just as the *snake* did not chase the *rope* away. But to see the *rope*, the Imagination of the *snake* must cease. Similarly, to know the Truth of the Self, Ignorance must cease.

True Knowledge is not experienced unless the prior ignorant conception is negated, just as the *snake* notion is destroyed to see the *rope*. The Self, of the nature of pure Consciousness, is self-existent & can never be negated. Egoism has its origin in Delusion & has for its *object* that which is only imagined. Its definitions are only thoughts. The discernment of “Not this, not this” negates the very existence of Egoism along with its origin, its effects, & its imagined object.

All qualities, gross (*physical*) or subtle (*mental*), ought to be negated from the Self, from one’s Identity. If one is to know the Self as it is, whatever be the qualities attributed to the Self, be they *physical* or *mental*, they are to be regarded as mere ornaments. These should not be regarded as the Identity of the one who “wears” those “ornaments” (*qualities*).

If one rejects all that is *objective* from one’s Identity, one comes to the conclusion that the Self is the Knower, free from all that is perceived & conceived. In the same manner as one relinquishes mis-identification with the Body, & all that is *objective*, so should one sever the mis-identification with the supposed *subject*, which is the Ego.

The Self's existence is independent of all & is different from all that is *objective*. The *objectified* "I" is the Ego. The superimposed *objective* portion of the "I"—consciousness should be abandoned, for it is not actually the Self. Negation of what is *objective* means also negation of the Ego. What remains is that which is implied in the aphorism: *Aham Brahmasmi* – "I am Brahman". Only *Brahman* can be itself, *1-without-a-2nd*. That is the only true "I".

Brahman is unborn, immortal, imperishable, ageless, & all-comprehensive. The same Absolute *Brahman* appears, according to one's understanding, as God, who is said to be the Lord who dispassionately dispenses the results of *karma*, or as the Witness, which is Consciousness in relation to all else, or the attributeless, eternal "I", of the nature of the indivisible, non-dual, Being-Consciousness & which alone is *without - a - 2nd*.



Reality 104

The Self has neither rise nor set, is neither in darkness nor illumined, but is always the spiritual Light, with nothing material or mental in its nature at all. The distinction between the Self & oneself is due only to superimposition, which is like imagining different openings in a castle wall, for instance, to be different spaces, rather than perceiving the castle space itself. The Self is non-dual, 1 – without – a – 2nd. It is neither distinct nor in relation to anything else. For non-dual Existence means there is no other. There is, thus, no difference or non-difference, no oneness or manyness, & no separate knower or doer or experiencer. The Self has nothing to accept or reject. And there is nothing, or no one else to accept or reject the Self. There is no one else to think the Self is, or that the Self is not. Such is the Truth regarding the Self.

The unknown Knower of all that is known, the Supreme Knowledge itself, Consciousness remains undivided by the *triad of Knower, Knowing, & Known*. Consciousness can never be a known or unknown object. Consciousness is the Witness of all, the only *Knower*. Consciousness, the *Knower*, is never defined by the *Known*. Consciousness, the Witness of every State, of all thought, is not defined by thought, nor contained in any State. The Witness is never known. Consciousness is ever non-*objective*. Consciousness is Formless – with nothing *objective* within or without. Unknown, Consciousness alone is known. Not a *process of Knowing*, Consciousness alone is *Knowing*. Not a *Known*, Consciousness alone is the *Knower*, the unknown *Knower* of all that is known.



Reality 105

The Knowledge of Reality, which is the Realization of the Self & the Realization of the Absolute, is attained by the direct path of true Knowledge. By liberating oneself from the mis-identification with what is not the Self, one knows the Self. When the Real Nature of what has been considered as the non-Self is seen, it invariably proves to be non-existent, for such non-Self was dependent upon mis-identification in order to even ever appear.

Blissful & Eternal is the Real Self. One should regard only that which has no beginning or end, is ever existent, is unchanging, is transcendent of all that has Form, of all that changes, & all that is in Time. The Self is also continuous & undivided as Real & one's own true Being. By this Knowledge, one abides in the Natural State, which is the only True State of the Self. The Self may be said to call unto itself, as the *Sought* & as the *Seeker*; as the *Guru* & as the *disciple*; as *God* & as the *devotee*. The Self seeks itself in meditation. The Self reveals itself as inner experience. The Self knows & abides in itself for blissful Eternity.

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[selections based on the 1st Mandala included in *Truth Revealed*]

The Self is just Being, pure Existence. It is not being this or that. It is just Being, pure Existence. Self-Realization is just Being. It is not being this or that. It is just Being. Being, pure Existence knows no alternative. The Self is just Being, pure Existence.

Being, pure Existence never changes its nature. That which truly is never ceases to be. That which ceases never actually is. That which truly exists never changes. That which changes never truly exists. That which is changeless is without destruction. The indestructible is only that which is without creation. The unborn is the undying. The unchanging is alone Being, pure Existence. Being never changes its nature.

The Self ever is just as it is. There is no time when Being, pure Existence is altered. There is no time when you are not the Self. Primordial Being eternally is, is what you are even now. Immutable Being is Peace itself. For there is no time when Being is altered. Just as it is, the Self ever is.

Being alone knows itself, the "I"-less "I" realized as "I," forever undefined, the only Existence, the only Knowledge, the only Knower. Thus is Brahman, Absolute Reality, always present, unmarred Perfection, the unformed Void, attributeless Being, ever itself just as it is. The only Identity, the only Reality, Being alone knows itself .

Without any other is Absolute Being, formless & Non-Dual, the only Existence. Two that are Formless cannot be. Undivided, homogeneous, alone is Being. nothing outside it & no outside; nothing within it; alone is Being, pure Existence. Nothing comes before eternal Being; nothing comes after eternal Being. Without any other is Absolute Being, pure Existence.

The Truth of Being is solely Reality. Not from illusory things falsely experienced does the sense of Reality in every experience derive, but only from the Self, the only source, the Real. Real Being depends not on anything else to be. Uncaused itself, the Absolute Self does not cause anything else. Infinite, there is nothing beyond it produced by it. Mistake not perception or conception for Existence itself. Reality is solely the Truth of Being.

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Reality 106

Master Nome defining Non-Duality in Shankara's system

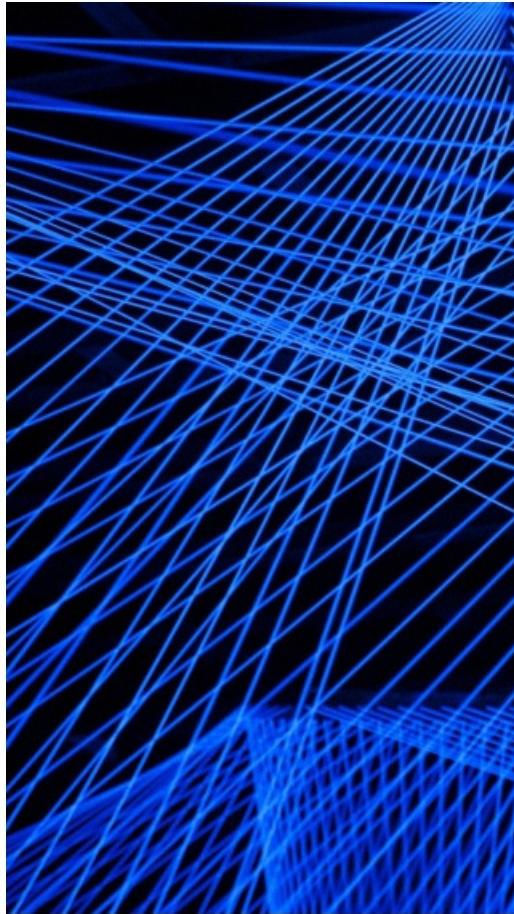
The basic premise of Non-Duality is that the Absolute exists & that the Absolute is identical with oneself. Therefore, Self-Knowledge is equated with the Realization of the Absolute. The basic premise of spiritual practice is that one knows that the Absolute exists & that realizing it is of utmost importance. This realization is Self-Realization. What is needed for this Self-Knowledge, or Realization, is the relinquishment of the assumptions, or concepts, that yield the Illusion of Bondage &, thus, Suffering. Knowledge of one's real Being as it is yields enduring Freedom & Peace. The true Self transcends the limitations of any kind of Individuality, Time, Birth & Death. The Self is Impersonal & not confined to any Body or Individual.

One's approach to one's *spirituality*, Meditation, & this Knowledge is of paramount importance. The approach very much determines the experience. How one views *anything* determines how it appears to him. Clarification of one's understanding of *oneself* causes one to arrive at Self-Knowledge. To know this as bring so is itself the dawning of Knowledge.

Deep Meditation dissolves the Ego, Ignorance, & Bondage of the one who ardently meditates. Self-Inquiry within oneself to know oneself reveals the true Self to be limitless Consciousness, Absolute Being, & unconditioned Bliss. This is one's very Existence.

One should continue meditating on the Teachings of Self-Knowledge by the practice of Self-Inquiry until one conclusively realizes the Self & *abides* without the least trace of Ignorance or Bondage.

Listening, reflection, & deep meditation [*shravana, manana nididhyasan*] are said to constitute ways of practicing Knowledge. Inquiring “*Who am I ?*”, knowing oneself free of mis-identification, & steady Abidance as the Self always are the inner experiences of these ways of practicing Knowledge.



Reality 107

On the Path of Self-Knowledge "Discrimination" signifies ability to Discern what is true & also implies the ability to determine the false or unreal from the Real. By so Discerning, or Discriminating, one pursues Truth to realize that Truth & thus destroys the Dream of Illusion or Ignorance. Ignorance creates Suffering. What destroys Ignorance reveals blissful Freedom, or Liberation. Ignorance is destroyed when one Discerns that it is, indeed, Ignorance & not the Truth. Ignorance exists & is binding only if one conjures it up & believes it.

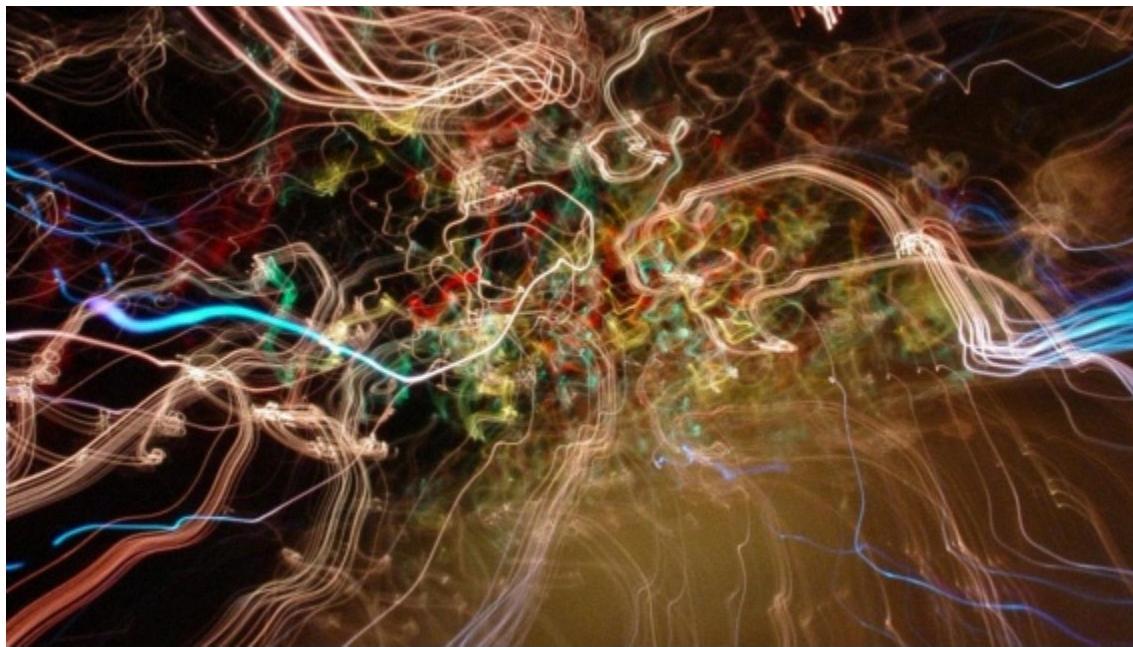
If by Discrimination, one Discerns the unreality of Ignorance, its false nature, then that Ignorance no longer binds & ceases to exist. In the place of such Ignorance, there is found real Knowledge. That Knowledge is of the Reality itself.

Just as one, wishing to arrive somewhere, needs to 1st know *where* it is that he wishes to go & *how* to proceed to there, so, too, one needs to recognize that the *place* of arrival (which is the highest Truth). One also needs to recognize that the *means* to arrive, which is Knowledge, & the Traveler, which is oneself are all in the *same place*, of the *same nature*, & are, indeed, are the very *same thing*.

Regardless of what names are given to the Supreme Reality, regardless of what symbols are used, & what practices are utilized, there are certain "*understandings / views*" that are assumed around which all these names, etc. revolve. These "*understandings / views*" or *beliefs* pertain to the Absolute, the Self, & what is regarded as Real. In many cases there will be the "world" or "worlds" on some of these "*understandings / views*". The great sage, Sri Shankara, observed that one can hold any of 4 views. For one, there is the Un-Qualified Duality [UQD] *view*. This means sheer Duality without any exception.

On the other hand, one can possess a *view* of Qualified Duality [QD]. This is a belief in Duality with some exceptions. Alternately, one may hold a *view* of Qualified Non-Duality [QND], that is, some Non-Duality while retaining some exceptions or Non-Duality. Or one can embrace pure, Un-Qualified Non-Duality [UQND]. The *view* to which one adheres will determine what kinds of spiritual *practices* are engaged in & *how* they are practiced.

These are not only basic *views*, forming one's *beliefs*, determining the manner of *practice* & the resultant *experiences*, but also represent degrees of depth, or height, of spiritual *experience*. Each succeeding *view* is more of the Truth, less of the Ego, more of Liberation, less of Bondage, more of Knowledge, & less of unexamined Ignorance.



Reality 108

In one's spiritual aspiration, one necessarily has a *view* of what the Absolute is, be it a set of *ideas* or a result of inner *experience*. The deeper the *experience*, the more transcendent of notions that *view* is & the more Non-Dual that *view* is.

An Un-Qualified Duality [UQD] view asserts that the Absolute is one thing & oneself another. There is a God, by whatever name God is called, & there is a separate *soul*, by whatever name that *soul* is called. These [God & the *soul*] are regarded as *different* in every respect. Though there may be *similarities*, such as both "lasting forever". But they [God & the *soul*] are regarded as different as 2 *distinct* "objects", as *different*. With such an approach, one practices to establish some relation to the Supreme, the Lord. But there is no *union* or *merger*. Even in a Heavenly realm, the distinction still persists. In Un-Qualified Duality, UQD the Absolute is viewed as if with all the qualities of a "person", but on a grander scale, distinct from all other persons. With Un-Qualified Duality [UQD] as one's relation with the Lord, the Supreme remains relatively fixed. With Un-Qualified Duality [UQD] as one's view, spiritual practice aims at the *strengthening* of the relation with the Lord, the Supreme.

Now Qualified Duality [QD] view also supposes the Absolute to be one thing & oneself another, there is some sameness due to *relation*. The Absolute may be regarded as one's Source, just as a *spark* has *fire* as its Source. But the *spark* [*soul*] it is not regarded as the *same* as the *fire* [Source] itself. The Absolute may be regarded as something to which one will eventually *return*, but it is not regarded as the same as one's own State now, or as one's Nature. With such a Qualified Duality [QD] view, spiritual practice maintains a *relation* to the Absolute with the knowledge that one "was once" part of that limitless Being & one may "return" to it. But, for now, one must seek to deepen one's relation to that God. The Supreme is viewed as similar to a "person" but which has left its *mark*, *spark*, or a *trace* of that God in the Individual.

Then in the view of Qualified Non-Duality [QND], there is now Absolute bring of the same nature as oneself, one's self being of the same nature as that Absolute. There are distinctions though, such as a difference in vastness, steadiness of experience, & such. It is said to be as a *glass* of water & the *Ocean*. They both are *water*, the same thing, yet they are not the same. One's understanding can extend to the point of viewing the Absolute as a *background* of All, or as a *substrate* of all, as *That* from which everything arises & to which all will return, & even as *That* which pervades everyone & everything with a distinction between the *Pervader* & the ""pervaded. In Qualified Non-Duality [QND] there can be experience of *union*, but this will be followed by *separation* again, though there can be a memory of the union while differentiation resumes. The individual experiencer remains, for whom all else arises, who thinks, who feels, who acts, & such. With the view of Qualified Non-Duality [QND], spiritual practice will be one of attempting *merger* or *union*. The Absolute is viewed more *impersonally*, as a greater Intelligence or as some all-pervading Presence.

In pure, or Un-Qualified Duality [UQD], the Absolute is the Self, & the Self is the Absolute. There is no other Absolute & no other Self. They are forever indivisible. Union is ever the reality, or it may be said there is never a division at any time. All differentiation is regarded as the misperception of a *Rope* to be a *Snake*; it is purely Ignorance, or Imagination, & never Real at anytime. There is no Individuality, & the Ego-death or destruction of that ignorant Ego-assumption, with its concomitant ideas of all else, is by Knowledge. One's practice is that of Knowledge, the prime method of which is Self-inquiry, the finding of the answer within oneself to the introspective question, "Who am I ?"

Reality 109

Knowledge, itself is the Path, or the *means* of spiritual practice, & the method of Meditation is Self-Inquiry. In Non-Duality, the aim of the reception & absorption of spiritual instruction is the Knowledge of “*That thou art*,” as the Upanishad declares. In Non-Duality, the Absolute is known as Existence itself, or as Consciousness, itself. Meditations on the Substrate, the Background, the all-pervading One, & such are understood as steps & not the final Reality. Reality, itself, is unchanging, forever indivisible, always present, & *without-a-2nd* or anything other.

The view of oneself may either be a collection of mis-identifications, or else it may be actual Knowledge of oneself. The deeper, or higher, the view, the more Non-Dual it will be. It is Duality when one's identity, the "self" is regarded as an individual soul encased within a Body. That *soul* will thus be always less than & different from God. Even after Death, there will be a *soul* with another kind of Body, even if it be more *subtle* [astral]. Because of mis-identification, all the activities of the Mind & Body are regarded as one's own, & the existence of the Ego is unquestioned. Yet if one dedicates these activities in service to God according to His will, he thus attenuates the influence of Egotism.

All the *objects* of knowledge change. All that are described as “mine” & Ego, also cannot illumine themselves, nor can they illumine each other. The Self is different from all that are described as “mine” & Ego. The Self is the unchanging, illuminating Consciousness. This Consciousness is truly one's only Identity. Therefore, there can never truly be Bondage.

One Non-Dual Self alone is. The one Non-Dual Self is the undivided Consciousness. This is the only Knower in all. There are not different kinds of knowers, such as higher & lower knowers. The Minds of all are pervaded by the one Consciousness within, which is the Self. This is the "I" of all. So there is no one else who knows, or who does not know. The "I" is truly the Absolute, *Brahman*, all-knowing & all-pervading.

This "I" pervades & illumines the Mind. An the Mind pervades & illumines all things ever experienced. Thus this "I" is the illuminator & pervader of all. This Self is the Witness of all *objects* of the Mind. These mental *objects* are subtle thoughts & also all the *objects* conceived as external as well. This

includes being the Witness of all other Minds conceived as existing within the Mind. Thus the Self is the Witness of all.

The Mind cannot conceive the Self, yet the Mind has no existence apart from the Self. The Self can neither be accepted, nor rejected by any of the Minds. That which cannot be accepted or rejected by the Mind is *Brahman*. That is truly the "I". *Brahman* & the Self are One.



Reality 110

In Qualified Duality [QD], the self is regarded as an individual *soul* with a *spark* of the Divine within it. The *soul* should be guided by that *spark*. There is identity with all the activities of the Body & Mind & no real questioning of the existence of the Ego. But the inner Divinity can guide these personal activities, just like the Will of God functioning in an outer way.

In Qualified Non-Duality [QND], the "self" is regarded as the experiencer. This may be as a *sensing* entity or as a *mental* entity. Even as a sensing entity, the emphasis will still be on the *awareness* incorporated in the sensory experience, because anything spiritual presumes one is not identifying as a mere Body seeking mere sensory things.

If there is *merger*, the experiencer remains or returns as the "ongoing reality" & the higher experience is regarded as that which comes & goes. The attributes of the Ego may be questioned or released, such as aspects of the Mind or tendencies of thought. But the Ego itself or Individuality, is not actually inquired into. The Individual is the one who is attempting to

combine the higher experiences with the retained belief of a manifest World. That World which is perceived, or conceived, by a process of mis-identification.

In Un-Qualified pure Non-Duality [UQND], the Self is known to be pure, Formless Being-Consciousness-Bliss, with no Individuality at all, & not defined by a Mind or a Body. The aspirant is not a "self" or a "soul", but the Non-Dual Self, without limit, definition, or form. The Self is the Reality, without coming or going, without Birth or Death. The Self is utterly impersonal & attributeless. The Non-Dual practice is that

of singular Self-Inquiry to know the Self; not the Self in relation to anything else, but to know it as it is free of mis-identification. The Self is free of Subject & Object, & the Knowledge of the Self is non-objective. Hence, it is Self-Knowledge in which the Knower & the Known are the same. One practices Self-Inquiry so as to abide in steady Knowledge of the Self.



Reality 111

In Un-Qualified Duality [UQD], Qualified Duality [QD], & Qualified Non-Duality [QND], Knowledge becomes increasingly important. In Un-Qualified Non-Duality [UQND], Knowledge is of paramount importance for Knowledge alone destroys Ignorance, & what one seeks is to experience Reality as it is. To the degree that there is an increase of Knowledge of the Self, even accidentally, to that degree is spiritual advancement occurring in any spiritual practice undertaken with any view.

In Non-Duality, since the Absolute & one's Self are identical, it is all-important to realize the Self. Since the Self is the Reality, which ever is, & all differentiation is only imagined in Ignorance, the

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Consciousness is the Absolute

ayam atma brahma
This Self is the Absolute

tat tvam asi
That Thou Art

aham brahmasmi
I am the Absolute Reality

J Stiga

Realization comes by, & is identical with, the Knowledge of the Self, which alone destroys Ignorance. Since it is imperative to know oneself, the practice is that of Self-Inquiry to know the Self. When one recognizes that Non-Duality must be what is true, one takes the path to realize it.

What one regards as real is, or becomes, one's experience. According to the degree of Duality or Non-Duality, what is regarded as real will be different. In all cases, there must be the breaking of attachment to the things of the World, but the depth reached thereafter is different. In Un-Qualified Duality [UQD] the World is regarded as real. It is the creation of the Supreme, God, unless one is an Atheist, in which case it is an accident of matter, but such would not be any spiritual view at all. The World is regarded as external, one seems to dwell in it, & the Supreme seems elsewhere. The determination of Reality is the Senses & the mental cognition of the same. In Duality, God is regarded as one part of Reality, & the Individuals, the World, & God seem as 3 distinct things.

In Qualified Duality [QD], the World is regarded as real & created, but it is the splendor, or manifestation, of the Supreme. Some part of the Supreme manifests its presence in the World in various ways. The World may be viewed its God's "Eternal Play" [*lila*], or as something that is temporarily "arising". The determination of Reality is still the Senses & the Mind. The Supreme is seen as one part of the Reality, but it has left its *spark*, or something of itself in the Individuals & in the World.

In Qualified Non-Duality [QND], the World is regarded as real as a projection of the Supreme, as a *Dream* of God, as a Creation of the Mind, as the Mind's play, as the energy of Consciousness, or as similar to these. The determination of Reality is still with the Senses & the Mind, & the Objective aspect is regarded as existent yet, in nature, more *subtle* than matter.

Therefore, the Absolute, or the Self, is regarded as only one part of Reality, & not the only reality. In Un-Qualified pure Non-Duality [QND], there is no embodied Individual &, so, no World perceived by the Individual or the Body.

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Reality 112

Happiness lies deep within us, in the very core of our being. Happiness does not exist in any external object, but only in us, who are the Consciousness that experiences Happiness. Though we seem to derive Happiness from external objects or experiences, the Happiness that we thus enjoy in fact arises from within us.

The science of being is incredibly simple and clear. The science of being begins with observation and analysis of something that we already know but do not fully understand. This science does not study any object of knowledge, but instead studies the very power of knowing itself – the power of Consciousness that underlies the Mind, the power by which all objects are known.

Much can & has been said & written about restoring true Self-Identity through the meditation of inward Self-Inquiry. Any sincere seeker can find all that, especially now with the Internet to get started with. Even with a few false turns, the one who truly desires Freedom (*Liberation from ignorance*) will have it.

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You & I & all are that same Self, though we may seem to be "caught" in a Waking Dream world of Time & Space (*at night, other dream worlds supervene, while in Deep Sleep, none at all*). While seeming so "caught", we best pursue Self-Inquiry, with authentic texts that support that & qualified live guidance when possible. Otherwise we progressively shine in our World (*even if obscurely*) fulfill responsibilities, relationships, work, etc. in Peace. Any help offered to what can appear as a stricken World & inevitable death in that World, comes from the inner basis, & less-so, the practical basis elsewhere described. The quest of Enlightenment, Liberation, is the most satisfying & significant venture possible.

A notion of "other" seems to flicker in dimensionless, infinite Consciousness. But "other" leaves behind a "me" – the Ego—"I". Other thoughts referenced to this false "I" make up a Personality, an Individual Mind. Mind pretends to function through a Brain, with Senses, all in a head-quarters on top of a Body that moves & lives on a planet in a Universe.

Yet just as every Conception takes up no space in that space-less Mind, so too every Perception projects "out" from Mind as just another thought & takes up no space either. The objects perceived, the World just ain't really there. Only the thoughts & they're no more substantive than the Dream thoughts that make up every Dream world we experience. Even when we think we enjoy a World, that's all just an inside job too. Ditto for sorrow. Happiness feels very inside, just like Love because they're both the same Reality – Consciousness.

By constantly fixing his attention on his Source, the Ego of the wise gets dissolved like a "salt doll" which has fallen into the Ocean.

Prajnanam Brahma Consciousness is Brahman. Aitareya U. 3.3, Rig V

Ayam Atma Brahma This Self is Brahman. Mandukya U. 1.2, Ath. V.

Tat Twam As That Thou Art Brihadaranyaka U. 1.4.10, Yajur V.

Aham Brahmasmi I am Brahman. Chhandogya U. 6.7.8, Sama V.

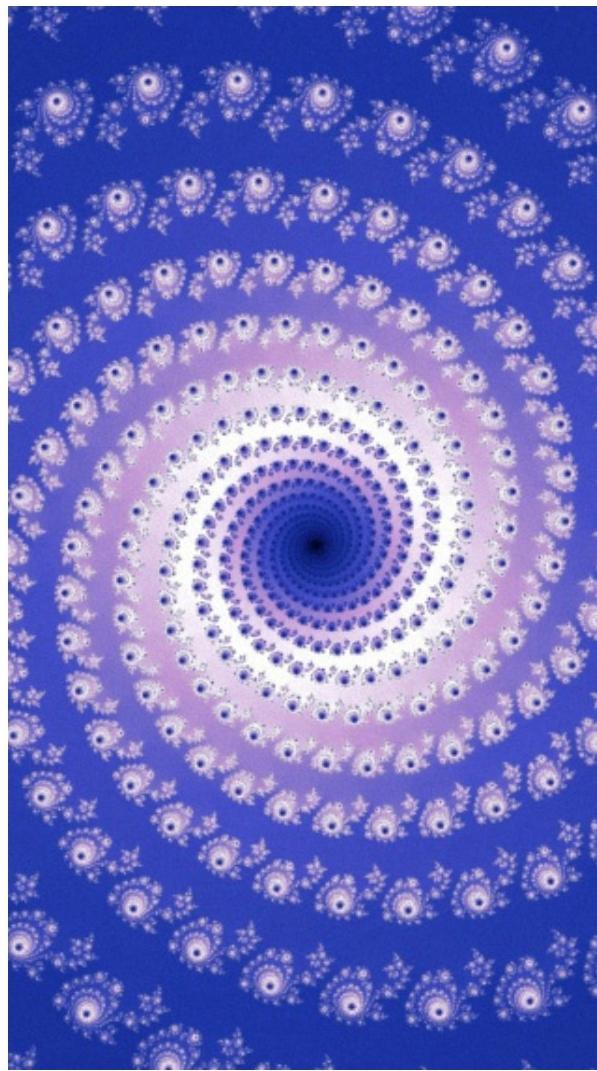
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Reality 113

Atma Vichara, Self-Inquiry

Sri Shankara & Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi described the practical means to attain Self-Knowledge as *Atma Vichara*, usually translated as Self-Inquiry, "Who am I ?" But repeated self-questioning is not the intended meaning, but it is rather the inward *Self* direction denoted. Alternate translations include: "Self-attention". Alternate Sanskrit indicators include: *Atma Nishta*, "Self-abidance".

If the question "Who am I ?" is helpful, the a singular deep-felt, silent inward-probe could be enough. *Vichara* generally has alternate meanings of "pondering, deliberation, consideration, reflection, examination, investigation" in the sense of "unbiased examination with a view to arriving at the truth."

And so *Atma Vichara* means "Self-investigation", "Self-scrutiny" or "Self-examination" of the fundamental Consciousness "I am" with a keen focus & intensity. Thus we awaken to *That*.

Methods of "Self-surrender" & "Self-denial" are equivalent, so long as Individuality, Ego is *erased*.

It is not that you become That, as if you had the power to break off from it & return to it at some later date, but, rather, That, the Absolute, is the solitary Existence always, & That is what you are. This is true to such an extent that you are not a part of it, nor is it a part of you, but rather the Self is the Absolute, & the Absolute is the Self; the Absolute is not other, & the Self is not other. Master Nome

Tat Tvam Asi, That You Are

To abide in identity with this Reality known as Brahman, the vast Absolute, you must know yourself. "Tat Tvam Asi", the *Mahavakya*, [great proclamation] of the *Upanishads* about you & this Absolute Reality, or God, *Brahman*, "That You Are." Therefore, know yourself. If you know yourself, you know the Absolute, & what you know is what you are.

The Teaching is that of perpetual Truth, for Reality does not have an alternative. All Peace, Happiness, & Freedom is inherent in this Reality known as Brahman, the vast Absolute, which is neither an object nor an individual. The only way to realize it is to abide in identity with it. Master Nome

Essence Of The Teaching

Non-Duality is the Essence of the Teaching, & also the source of the Teaching, & each one who comprehends the Teaching. All these are one & the same thing. The same is imperturbable Peace & *Ananda*, Bliss, the Happiness that leaves nothing else to be desired. The same is that immense Freedom, *Moksha*, or Liberation from all of the imagined Bondage, Freedom which does not depend upon objects, situations, events, or conditions of any kind.

Being as Consciousness – Nome comments

"That should be known as Self Realization in which no alternative is possible, in which there is just one infinite, unconditioned, eternal, homogeneous, formless Self, which is not the cause of anything which is not the effect of any thing else, in which there is nothing else, but which is infinite, with no division, no separation, & which has no parts within it. It is absolute & not in relation to anything else, but just is as it is. As for anything else, it also is just the same Absolute. To realize this is very simple. It is simpler than even a thought. It is simpler than the idea of "I". That divine simplicity lies where you are alone with no "I" to disturb you." Master Nome

Embellishing comment on the text is impossible in this case. More to the point this time is the issue of realizing the above directly within oneself. To rest in the superficial "I", for just an instant, & then sink as Consciousness, with full intensity, in toward the True Self & abide there peacefully brings effortless Self-Realization in short or long order. Whatever the time, whatever the effort – it's worth it.

The quote itself is one of the most complete & insightful definitions of Self-Realization to be found anywhere, in any language.

More spontaneous, deep comments by a World Teacher.

"The bodies here do not make for a multiplicity of selves. The idea of "others" exists only in one's Mind, as does the entire world. Trace this Mind to its source. From where do its ideas originate? You will find they originate from a sense of "I" which is integral to every one of its ideas. Inquire further to see the core, or nature of this "I". You will find its real "I"- nature, the non-ego state." Master Nome

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Reality 114

Others

Hardly anything is taken for granted more than all the "others" here with us – friends, Relatives, associates, people on the street & where we work. What? Nobody here but us chickens? [an old cliché from a song title, an Our Gang phrase spoken by a racial stereotype kid hiding in a chicken coop, & a turn-of-the-century racial magazine parody long before that]

All Perception & Conception is thought in an unreal Mind, & that goes for our own Body & all the "others". Oh, we are real & so are they all – but as One Consciousness – not as separate bodies housing separate individuals. If there was a Mind, an empty Container with no form, no boundaries, it would be like a 3-D graph-space with thoughts, somehow floating in the Coordinate Space. It is like a Coordinate Space in that each thought is defined with reference to a central Origin, somewhat as on a graph. Every indefinable thought has supposed meaning, only with reference to that Origin which is Ego. Like this metaphor, or with whatever other theory or nature that a Mind is supposed to have, can any such concept actually be Real?

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Penetrating deeply with Self-Inquiry, abide in "*the core, or nature of this "I" ... its real "I"- nature, the non-ego state*" – the Absolute Non-Dual Self.

Being as Consciousness – some Master Nome comments

_Spontaneous, off-the-cuff comments by a "World Teacher" [even if not so widely recognized as such in his / her lifetime] – in response to questions in Satsang, are typically very deep.

"If you deeply, penetratingly inquire within yourself "Who am I ?" you find that you cannot possibly be a body; nor can you be an individualized or separated Mind; nor can you be the idea of "I" which is just an idea & not your essential Being, or the quintessential Consciousness."

Master Nome

This perfect summary warrants word-for-word adherence. Examined carefully, without "body-image" prejudice, [*typically stronger when the Body is self-appraised as especially beautiful, or the opposite*], that trillion-cell, dying sack of unlikely atoms belongs in a zoo or biology lab more than in the center of your Mind as one's actual Identity. Can I really be this salt-water bag, jammed with muscle-meat & neurons ? Where is my actual self in all that mess ? Where was that Body a hundred years ago ? Where will it be a hundred years from now ? If this Consciousness began decades ago, then how ? How do wet neurons "know", how do they seem to think ? Will I really soon disappear ? Or could there really be some individual "soul" transported to some fairy-tale Purgatory jail-house, or worse ? Who makes this stuff up ?

How about some "Mind" that is a supposedly invisible, individual *ghost* that generates unsubstantial thoughts, each lasting for an instant, none with any way to contact other thoughts or some *objective* outer entities ? Materialist nerve-soup theories are just as flimsy. Am I what I think ? What is a Mind anyway ?

Then there's that instantaneous notion "I", the reference for each & every thought – good/bad for "me", close/far from "me", & so on. Some inner certainty of Existence is doubtless. But what constitutes any actual self that "I" could refer to ? Can "I" be anything *objective* at all, or must it not be point to a pure *Subjectivity* that must be Formless, without boundary or separation, & not-individualized ? As for the true Universal, Non-Dual "I", what does it "do", how does it "be" ? Find "I" to be Pure Consciousness.

Already the Self

Reality is Infinite & no kind of *Object* or Individual. Reality realizes itself & knows itself. Reality is itself the Teaching & the Source of the Teaching, as well as that which comprehends the Teaching & is already Liberated. All things, the only thing, is the same thing, & that is yourself. The Teaching does not have an alternative, for such would be unreal, would be nothing.

The Realization, or Knowledge, regarding this Truth is imperturbable Peace, as Existence, or real Being, itself. Declared to be the highest Joy, *Ananda*, Bliss, the Happiness of Freedom, *Moksha* is complete. The imagined Bondage of Individuality has no place, not even a ghost-like existence Brahman, the vast Absolute.

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Abiding as what/who I am naturally & effortlessly is Self-Realization. Seeking what/who I am & getting to know the innermost Self with all due effort is Self-Inquiry. Continue until the latter is found to be the former.

When attachment to material things is removed, the attachment of the Mind also vanishes. Those who have got rid of their attachment of Mind become one with That which is motionless. They become Liberated.

- Ramana Maharshi

By Non-attachment there is Freedom from Delusion; from Freedom from Delusion, there is the immutable Truth; from the immutable Truth there is Liberation.

Shankara

Your greatest glory [the Self] lies where you [Ego] cease to exist.

- Ramana Maharshi

Where you cease to exist, real Existence is self-revealed.

- Master Nome



Reality 115

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& Ego. The Self is the unchanging, illuminating Consciousness. This Consciousness is truly one's only Identity. Therefore, there can never truly be Bondage.

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This "I" pervades & illumines the Mind. An the Mind pervades & illumines all things ever experienced. Thus this "I" is the illuminator & pervader of all. This Self is the Witness of all *objects* of the Mind. These mental *objects* are subtle thoughts & also all the *objects* conceived as external as well. This includes being the Witness of all other Minds conceived as existing within the Mind. Thus the Self is the Witness of all.

The Mind cannot conceive the Self, yet the Mind has no existence apart from the Self. The Self can neither be accepted, nor rejected by any of the Minds. That which cannot be accepted or rejected by the Mind is *Brahman*. That is truly the "I". *Brahman* & the Self are One.

The Truth regarding the Self is that it is of the nature of Being-Consciousness-Bliss, & there is nothing other than the Self. The Self is 1-w/o-a-2nd, without anything other. In the *Ribhu Gita*, experience is described as composed of 5 parts: Being, Consciousness, Bliss, Name & Form. The same *Gita* says that the first 3 pertain to Reality, & the last 2 pertain to utter Illusion. The Reality is *Being-Consciousness - Bliss*, while that which is Illusion is Name & Form. Illusion signifies something actually nonexistent, something that is not.

What is meant by Name & Form ? Form refers to everything perceived through the Senses. Name refers to all that is Formulated in ideas, anything of a mental character.

To those who are wisely meditating & thus recognizing that the World exists only in the Mind & nowhere else, we often say that the Truth is Formless. This statement pertains to both Name & Form. Everything perceptible & conceivable is not the Self & so such is not the actual Truth.

Being-Consciousness-Bliss is said to be Truth. Being is non-*objective*. It has no Form, is qualityless & attributeless, & *That* which ever is. The Self, *Being* is *Consciousness* but not mere thought-Form & not mere sensation. The Self is Bliss but not a mere mode of Mind or emotion, not something that depends on an outer cause or set of conditions, & not something that happens in Time. The Self is Bliss that is that is simultaneous & identical with *Being*, which the ever-present Consciousness.

In the book, *Who am I ?*, the Maharshi points out this fact regarding the Self. At the commencement of the text, after describing the negation of every kind of mis-identification — starting with the Body, including *Prana* or Life Energy, & proceeding to the Mind & all else — he says, "*The Awareness that remains is of the nature of Being-Consciousness-Bliss.*" That is, it is not individualized, it is not embodied, & it is not of Name & Form. *That Awareness* is the Formless, attributeless, eternal Truth, & that is the real nature of the Self, which is who you are. It is this that you experience if you deeply Inquire within yourself, "*Who am I ?*"

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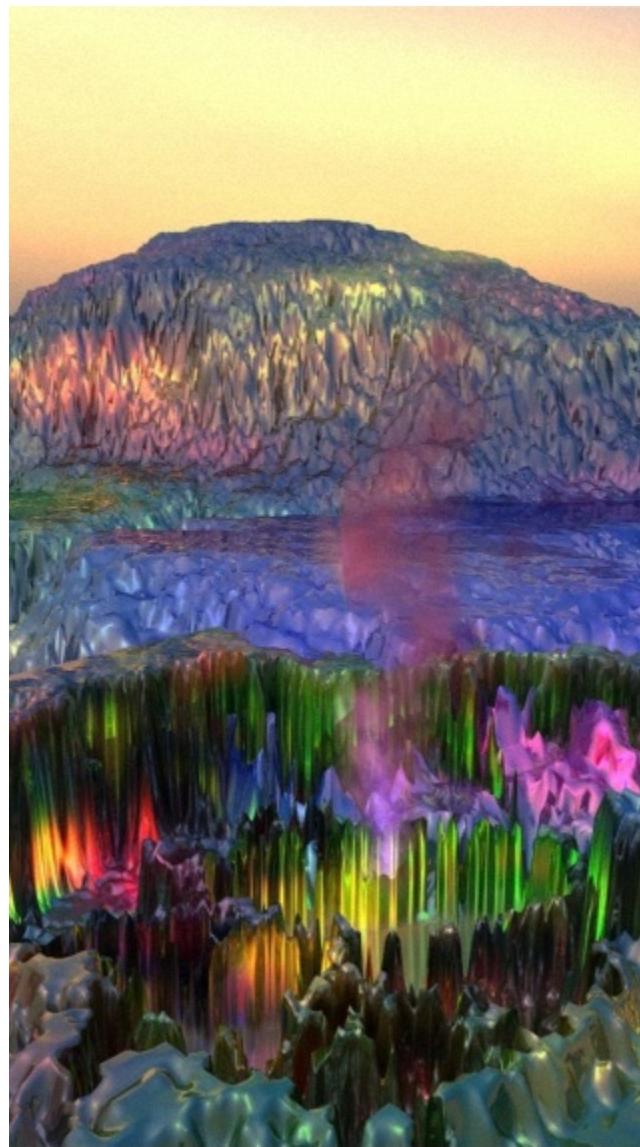
aham brahmasmi
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The *Upanishads*. also speak of the Self as *Sat-Chit-Ananda, Being-Consciousness-Bliss*. The same Upanishads also refer to it as *Truth-Knowledge-Infinity* [*Satyam Jnanam Anantam – both comparable to Satyam Shiva Sundarum, the True, the Good, the Beautiful*].

Truth-Knowledge-Infinity. Truth is what *is*, & Truth is something that *always is*. To find the Truth, look to that which is ever existent, which is something without Birth or Death, Creation or Destruction. When you Inquire within yourself to know Truth, you are looking for that which actually *is*. *Truth*, or *Reality*, is that which *is* & which is *ever-existent* & which must be changelessly so. If it is not ever-existent, it would be true at one time & false at another. And Truth cannot be false at any time. What Truth is, always is. If it would change in the least degree, it would be a "truth" that forms admixtures with what is false. If though, what you find is True, it never mixes with anything else, because of its invariable nature & because there is nothing else for it to mix with, for the Real is, & the unreal is not. The Real will not mix with the unreal. If you apply this Knowledge to yourself in searching for the actual experiential Realization of the Truth within you, you will understand what is meant by "1-w/o-a-2nd," "Non – Duality," & "there has never been anything else." You will understand why the ancients said, "*Brahman alone is*." Brahman means vast Absolute Truth. You will understand why the ancients said "*All this is only Brahman*," "*There is nothing but Brahman*" & so forth.

Truth-Knowledge-Infinity. The 1st term is Truth, & the 2nd is Knowledge. It is a basic, spiritual fact, which can be discerned by anyone who is introspective, that Ignorance alone is the cause of Bondage & its consequent Suffering.



Reality 116

The basic premise of Non-Duality is that the Absolute exists & that the Absolute is identical with oneself. Therefore, Self-Knowledge is equated with the Realization of the Absolute. The basic premise of spiritual practice is that one knows that the Absolute exists & that realizing it is of utmost importance.

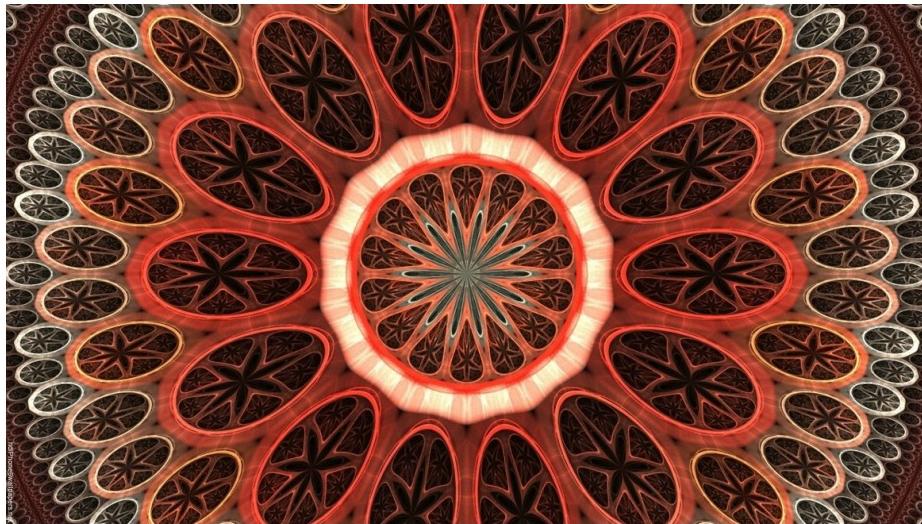
This realization is Self-Realization. What is needed For this Self-Knowledge, or Realization, is the relinquishment of the assumptions, or concepts, that yield the illusion of Bondage &, thus, Suffering. Knowledge of one's real Being as it is yields enduring freedom & peace. The true Self transcends the limitations of any kind of individuality, time, birth & death. It is impersonal & not confined to any Body or Individual.

One's approach to one's spirituality, Meditation, & this Knowledge is of paramount importance, for the approach very much determines the experience. How one views anything determines how it appears to him. Clarification of one's understanding of oneself causes one to arrive at Self-Knowledge. To know this as so is itself the dawning of knowledge. Deep Meditation dissolves the Ego, Ignorance, & Bondage

of the one who ardently meditates. Self-Inquiry within oneself to know oneself reveals the true Self to be limitless Consciousness, Absolute Being, & unconditioned Bliss. This is one's very Existence.

One should continue meditating on the teachings of Self-Knowledge by the practice of Self-Inquiry until one conclusively realizes the Self & abides without the least trace of Ignorance or Bondage. Listening, reflection, & deep meditation [*shravana, manana nididhyasana*] are said to constitute ways of practicing Knowledge. Inquiring "Who am I?", knowing oneself free of mis-identification, & steady abidance as the Self always are the inner experiences of these.

On the path of Self-Knowledge "Discrimination" signifies ability to discern what is true & also implies the ability to determine the false or unreal. or ullru.:1|. By so discerning, or discriminating one pursues Truth to realize it & destroys the dream of Illusion or Ignorance. Ignorance creates suffering. What destroys Ignorance reveals blissful Freedom, or Liberation. Ignorance is destroyed when one discerns that it is, indeed, Ignorance & not the Truth. Ignorance exists & is binding only if one conjures it up & believes it. If by Discrimination, one discerns its unreality, or false nature, it no longer binds & ceases to exist. In its place is found real Knowledge, which is Knowledge of the Reality itself As one, wishing to arrive somewhere, needs to 1st know where it is that he wishes to go & how to proceed to there, so, too, one needs to recognize that the place of arrival, which is the highest Truth, the means to arrive, which is knowledge, & the traveler, which is oneself are all in the same place, of the same nature, & are, indeed, the very same thing.



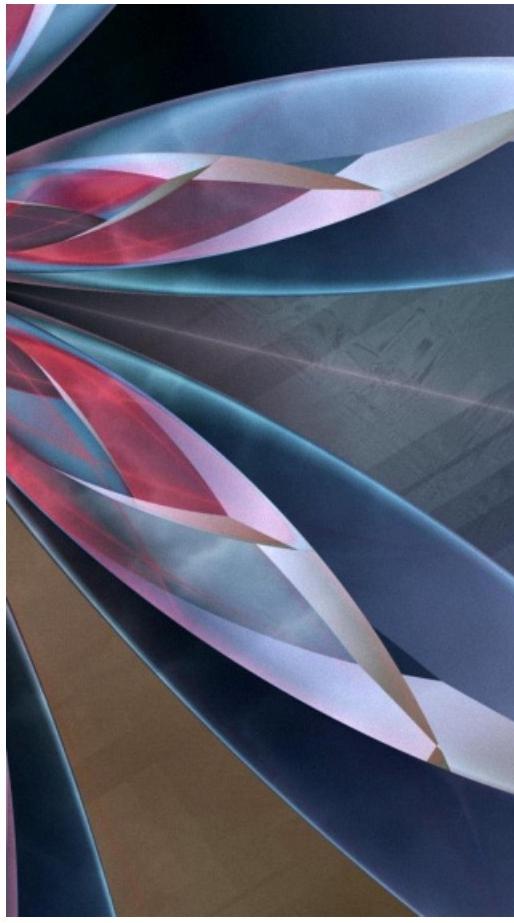
Reality 117

Regardless of what names are given to the Supreme, regardless of what symbols are used, & what practices are utilized, there are certain views that are assumed around which all these names, etc. revolve. These understandings, views, or beliefs pertain to the Absolute, the Self, & what is regarded as Real, which in many cases will be the World or worlds. The great sage, Adi Shankara, observed that one can hold any of 4 views. One can adhere to an Un-Qualified Duality [UQD] view. This means sheer Duality without any exception.

On the other hand, one can possess a view of Qualified Duality [QD]. This is a belief in Duality with some exceptions. Alternately, one may hold a view of Qualified Non-Duality [QND], that is, some Non-Duality while retaining some exceptions or Non-Duality. Or one can embrace pure, Un-Qualified

Non-Duality [UQND]. The view to which one adheres will determine what kinds of spiritual practices are engaged in & how they are practiced. These are not only basic views, forming one's beliefs, determining the manner of practice & the resultant experiences, but also represent degrees of depth, or height, of spiritual experience. Each succeeding one is more of the Truth, less of the Ego, more of Liberation, less of Bondage, more of Knowledge, & less of unexamined Ignorance.

In one's spiritual aspiration, one necessarily has a view of what the Absolute is, be it a set of ideas or a result of inner experience. The deeper the experience, the more transcendent of notions it is & the more Non-Dual it is. An Un-Qualified Duality [UQD] view asserts that the Absolute is one thing & oneself another. There is a God, by whatever name called, & there is a separate soul, by whatever name called, & these are regarded as different in every respect. Though there may be similarities, such as both lasting forever, they are regarded as different as 2 distinct Objects, as different as an elephant & a king, as in the *Puranic* story of the sage, Ribhu, & his disciple, Nidagha. With such an approach, one practices to establish some relation to the Supreme, the Lord, but there is no union or merger. Even in a heavenly realm, the distinction still persists.



Reality 118

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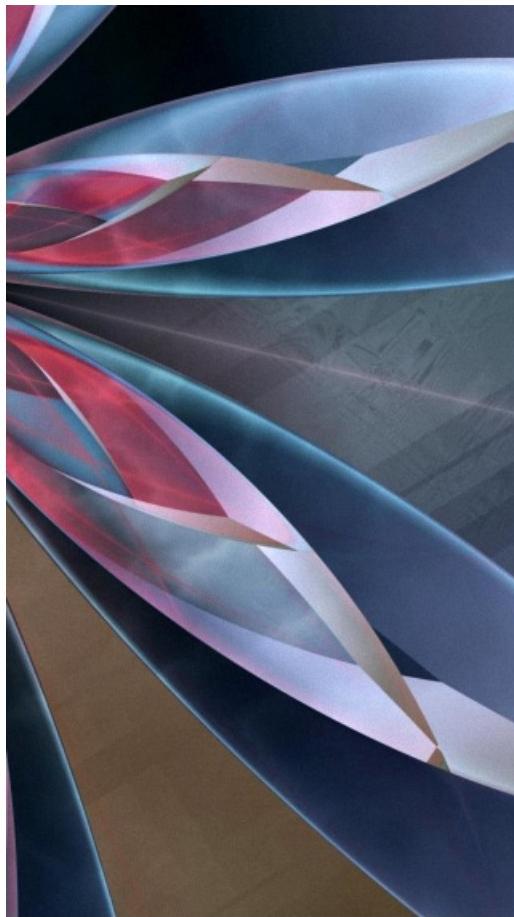
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In Duality, the Absolute is viewed as if with all the qualities of a person, but on a grander scale, distinct from all others. A Qualified Non-Duality [QND] view supposes the Absolute to be one thing & oneself another, but there is some sameness due to relation. The Absolute may be regarded as one's source, just as a spark has fire as its source, but it is not regarded as the same as the fire itself. The Absolute may be regarded as something to which one will eventually return, but it is not regarded as the same as one's own state now or as one's nature. With such a view, spiritual practice is to maintain a relation to the Absolute with the knowledge that one was once part of that limitless Being & one may return to it, but, for now, one must seek to deepen one's relation to that God. The Supreme is viewed as similar to a person, yet on a grander scale, but which has left its mark, spark, or a trace of itself in the individual. With Qualified Duality [QD] as one's view, spiritual practice aims at the strengthening of the relation with the Lord, the Supreme.

The view of Qualified Non-Duality [QND] is that the Absolute is of the same nature as oneself, one's self being of the same nature as it, though there are distinctions, such as a difference in vastness, steadiness of experience, & such. It is said to be as a glass of water & the ocean. They both are water, the same thing, yet they are not the same. One's understanding can extend to the point of viewing the Absolute as a background of All, or as a substrate of all, as that from which everything arises & to which all will return, & even as that which pervades everyone & everything with a distinction between the pervader & the pervaded. There can be experience of union, but this will be followed by separation again, though there can be a memory of the union while differentiation resumes. The individual experiencer remains, for whom all else arises, who thinks, who feels, who acts, & such. With the view of Qualified Non-Duality [QND], spiritual practice will be one of attempting merger or union. The Absolute is viewed more impersonally, as a greater intelligence or as some all-pervading presence.

In pure, or Un-Qualified Duality [UQD], the Absolute is the Self, & the Self is the Absolute. There is no other Absolute & no other self. They are forever indivisible. Union is ever the reality, or it may be

said there is never a division at any time. All differentiation is regarded as the misperception of a *Rope* to be a *Snake*; it is purely Ignorance, or imagination, & never real at anytime. There is no individuality, & the ego-death or destruction of that ignorant ego-assumption, with its concomitant ideas of all else, is by Knowledge. The practice is one of Knowledge, the prime method of which is Self-inquiry, the finding of the answer within oneself to the introspective question, "Who am I ?"



Reality 119

Knowledge, itself is the path, or the means of spiritual practice, & the method of meditation is Self-Inquiry. In Non-Duality, the aim of the reception & absorption of spiritual instruction is the Knowledge of "*That thou art*," as the Upanishad declares. In Non-Duality, the Absolute is known as Existence itself, or as Consciousness, itself Meditations on the substrate, the background, the all-pervading One, & such are understood as steps & not the final Reality. Reality, itself, is immutable, forever indivisible, always present, & *without-a-2nd* or anything other.

The view of oneself may be a collection of mis-identifications, or it may be actual Knowledge of oneself. The deeper, or higher, the view, the more Non-Dual it will be. It is Duality when one's identity, the "self" is regarded as an individual soul encased within a Body. It will thus be always less than & different from God. Even after Death, there will be a soul with another kind of Body, even if it be more subtle. Because of mis-identification, all the activities of the Mind & Body are regarded as one's own, & the existence of the Ego is unquestioned. Yet one dedicates these activities in service to God according to His will, thus attenuating the influence of Egotism.

In Qualified Duality [QD], the self is regarded as an individual soul with a spark of the divine within it. The soul should be guided by that spark. There is identity will all the activities of the Body & Mind & no real questioning of the existence of the Ego, but the inner divinity can guide these in addition to the will of God in an outer way.

In Qualified Non-Duality [QND], the "self" is regarded as the experiencer. This may be as a sensing entity or as a mental entity. Even as a sensing entity, the emphasis will still be on the awareness incorporated in the sensory experience, because anything spiritual presumes one is not identifying as a mere Body seeking mere sensory things. If there is merger, the experiencer remains or returns as the "ongoing reality" & the higher experience is regarded as that which comes & goes. The attributes of the Ego may be questioned or released, such as aspects of the Mind or tendencies of thought, but the Ego itself or Individuality, is not actually inquired into. The Individual is the one who is attempting to combine the higher experiences with the retained belief of a manifest World, which is perceived, or conceived, by a process of mis-identification.

In Qualified pure Non-Duality [UQND], the Self is known to be pure, Formless Being-Consciousness-Bliss, with no Individuality at all, & not defined by a Mind or a Body. It is not a "self" or a "soul", but the Non-Dual Self, without limit, definition, or form. It is the Reality, without coming or going, without Birth or Death. It is utterly impersonal & attributeless. The Non-Dual practice is that of singular Self-Inquiry to know the Self; not the Self in relation to anything else, but to know it as it is free of mis-identification. The Self is free of Subject & Object, & the Knowledge of the Self is non-objective. Hence, it is Self-Knowledge in which the Knower & the known are the same. One practices Self-inquiry so as to abide in steady Knowledge of the Self.

In Un-Qualified Duality [UQD], Qualified Duality [QD], & Qualified Non-Duality [QND], Knowledge becomes increasingly important. In Un-Qualified Non-Duality [UQND], Knowledge is of paramount importance for Knowledge alone destroys Ignorance, & what one seeks is to experience Reality as it is. To the degree that there is an increase of Knowledge of the Self, even accidentally, to that degree is spiritual advancement occurring in any spiritual practice undertaken with any view.

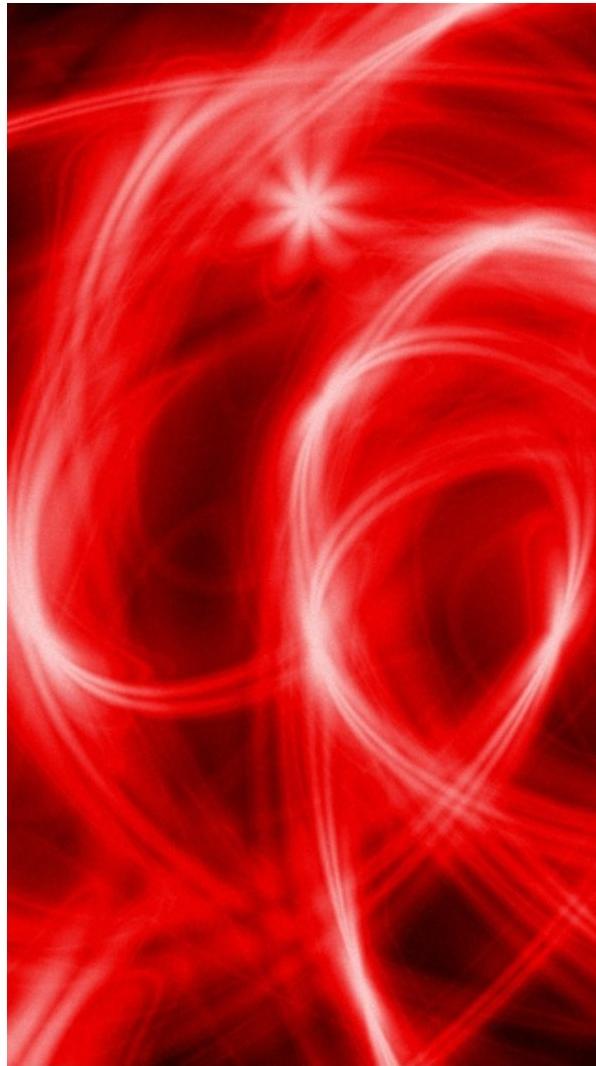
TOE vol 2 *prajnanam brahma*
Consciousness is the Absolute

ayam atma brahma
This Self is the Absolute

tat tvam asi
That Thou Art

aham brahmasmi
I am the Absolute Reality

J Stiga



Reality 120

In Non-Duality, since the Absolute & one's Self are identical, it is all-important to realize the Self. Since the Self is the Reality, which ever is, & all differentiation is only imagined in Ignorance, the Realization comes by, & is identical with, the Knowledge of the Self, which alone destroys Ignorance. Since it is imperative to know oneself, the practice is that of Self-Inquiry to know the Self. When one recognizes that Non-Duality must be what is true, one takes the path to realize it.

What one regards as real is, or becomes, one's experience. According to the degree of Duality or Non-Duality, what is regarded as real will be different. In all cases, there must be the breaking of attachment to the things of the World, but the depth reached thereafter is different. In Un-Qualified Duality [UQD] the World is regarded as real. It is the creation of the Supreme, God, unless one is an Atheist, in which case it is an accident of matter, but such would not be any spiritual view at all. The World is regarded as external, one seems to dwell in it, & the Supreme seems elsewhere. The determination of Reality is the Senses & the mental cognition of the same. In Duality, God is regarded as one part of Reality, & the Individuals, the World, & God seem as 3 distinct things.

In Qualified Duality [QD], the World is regarded as real & created, but it is the splendor, or manifestation, of the Supreme. Some part of the Supreme manifests its presence in the World in various ways. The World may be viewed as God's "Eternal Play" [*lila*], or as something that is temporarily "arising". The determination of Reality is still the Senses & the Mind. The Supreme is seen as one part of the Reality, but it has left its spark, or something of itself in the individuals & in the World.

In Qualified Non-Duality [QND], the World is regarded as real as a projection of the Supreme, as a Dream of God, as a Creation of the Mind, as the Mind's play, as the energy of Consciousness, or as similar to these. The determination of Reality is still with the Senses & the Mind, & the Objective aspect is regarded as existent yet, in nature, more subtle than matter.

Therefore, the Absolute, or the Self, is regarded as only one part of Reality, & not the only reality. In Un-Qualified pure Non-Duality [QND], there is no embodied Individual &, so, no World perceived by the Individual or the Body.



Reality 121

prior context:

TOE vol 2 *prajnanam brahma*
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ayam atma brahma
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In Qualified Non-Duality [QND], the World is regarded as real as a projection of the Supreme, as a Dream of God, as a Creation of the Mind, as the Mind's play, as the energy of Consciousness, or as similar to these. The determination of Reality is still with the Senses & the Mind, & the Objective aspect is regarded as existent yet, in nature, more subtle than matter. Therefore, the Absolute, or the Self, is regarded as only one part of Reality, & not the only Reality. In Un-Qualified pure Non-Duality [QND], there is no embodied Individual &, so, no World perceived by the Individual or the Body.

There is no Projection of or Creation by the Absolute, for the Absolute is changeless, without cause or effect. Pure Consciousness, or Being, itself, is alone the means of Knowledge or the determination of Reality, & what is a product of the Senses or the Mind, in any of the 3 States [*Waking, Dream, & Deep Dreamless Sleep*], is known to be mere Imagination. That which is ever-existent is alone regarded as Real.

The very idea of "all else" vanishes due to Self-Inquiry to know Reality, the Self. The Self alone is Real, always, & there are no parts in the Reality. Reality is Indivisible or Non-Dual. The World is only *That*, the Self is only *That*, & the Absolute is, of course, always *That*. There are actually none of these 3 [world , self, Absolute; *jagad, jiva, Para*], but only *That* which never becomes other than its own True Nature. This is known as the Unborn & as the Truth of No-Creation [*ajata vada*]. Though the Teachings of Non-Duality make expedient, beneficial use of the various explanations found in the other views, in order to help a seeker toward Liberation, the final Truth is utter Non-Duality & the essential practice is Self-Inquiry to know oneself.

All of these views concisely mentioned above [*UQD, QD, QND, UQND*] are dependent upon one's view of the Self. The degree of Ignorance or Knowledge regarding the Self determines the experience of all of these. Therefore, one ought to meditate by Self-Inquiry to determine one's True Nature, inquiring within as to "Who am I ?" One's aim should to liberate oneself from mis-identifications & know the Self as it is. One should be in search of the very *Brahman* that one really always is, even if it seems apparently veiled.

With each sensation or thought that arises, whether it pertains to World, the Body, or the Mind, one should ask oneself, "For who is this ?" The inner answer will naturally be, "It is for me." Thus abandoning the *objective* outlook & thus endowed with truly *inward*-turned Mind, one should then ask, "Who am I ?" Renounce whatever may be an *objective* definition seems to be the "I" & inquire: "Who am I ?"

Sri Ramana Maharshi refers to Self-Realization as the "Natural State" [*sahaja*]. The State of complete Freedom, of complete & indestructible Peace, & of complete inward satisfaction or Joy is the *Natural State*. It is not "natural" for anyone to feel bound, feel agitated, or suffer. This is why when a person feels that way, he or she makes an effort, be it considered worldly or spiritual, to get beyond such Suffering. That effort is an intuition of what is the *Natural State*, True State of the Self.

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J Stiga



Reality 122

Self-Realization has to do with one's very Existence, one's own Consciousness. It is deeply knowing it in the most profound way, in the way *all know that they exist*. You exist & you know that you exist. How? It is not due to just one's Sense Perceptions or one's passing thoughts. How does one know & what is this existence? The Real State of the Self is Innate. It is not something to be externally attained or acquired. Rather, it is something intrinsic to oneself of the very nature of one's Existence. Even if not known as it is, it is still present. When one realizes the Self, one sees that it is not a new State, but that which is ever-existent; but the imagined Bondage & the Illusion characterized by Suffering are no more.

Then, the *Natural State* of the Self is not something that comes & goes, but is always present. In the *Natural State*, one knows oneself as one truly is & does not identify with what is passing, be it the Body, the Sensations, or the ideas & states of the Mind. In Reality, which is ever-existent, one finds real Peace.

The *Natural State* of the Self is Freedom, & Bondage is unnatural. It is deep Happiness, or Bliss, that does not depend on a cause, but is one with Being, experienced directly when it is not overshadowed by the false notions of Ignorance. The Self in its *Natural State*, is free from all thoughts & all objects. This Realization, itself, is effortless. There is no struggle to maintain it, for it is free of Duality. It is not a becoming of anything in addition to the real Existence of the Self.

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Consciousness is the Absolute

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J Stiga

Self-Inquiry is a finding out what is true about one's True Nature, one's actual Existence. In Non-Duality, that which causes one to suffer, which are the false notions in his own Mind, are regarded as unnatural, not inherent in oneself. Yet something one usually attributes to himself the identity of "*the one who suffers*" is one who believes these notions to be true. What remains when these notions are no more is what is Natural, & what is Natural is something actually present all the time. Self-Inquiry is a precise means of knowing *That*. Self-Inquiry is the Path of true Knowledge. Let there be no inhibition of the effort to know the Absolute Reality, to know the Self. By perseverance, the apparently insuperable is overcome, & the apparently impossible is accomplished.

With honesty & integrity, humbly examining oneself closely, one gains clear, inward Discernment & brings about the destruction of binding tendencies that build up the Illusion of solidity of the Ego. With Detachment from what is transient & unreal, one finds Peace, true Freedom, & inner contentment. By dis-identification from what is transient & what is merely a product of delusive notions, one liberates oneself from all of the Illusion.

The Self is colorless, shapeless, of the nature of Existence-Consciousness, Universal, Uncreated, Eternal, Infinite, beyond Birth & Death, Formless, & Undifferentiated. This is the natural experience of all those who see themselves with the "*Eye*" of true Knowledge, with which those who practice the Self-Inquiry to know the Self become endowed.